

## Health Talk 0007 “Head Lice”

*Announcer: Welcome to “Health Talk”, where you’ll find “Good Advice for Good Health!” Now, here are Ty and Paula with today’s topic.*

T: Hi there! Today we’re talking about Head Lice. Paula, what are head lice?

P: Head lice are small insects that live in your hair or on your neck. They have no wings and are a light brown colour. Their eggs, or “nits”, look like little brown dots on your hair. The eggs stick to your hair making them hard to remove. When the eggs hatch into lice they bite you, causing itching, especially behind your ears or at the back of your neck. Head lice are not dangerous, but they multiply quickly and cause much discomfort, so you should try to get rid of them as soon as possible.

T: Having head lice does not mean that your hair is dirty, in fact head lice like clean hair. They are easily passed on when one person’s head touches another and through contact with clothing, bedding or toys. Children pass them on easily when they play together or when they share combs, brushes or hats, so encourage your children not to share these items. And please check your children regularly for head lice. So, how do we look for head lice?

P: Well, head lice are very small and difficult to see but you might see their eggs, or notice their droppings which look like a fine black powder on your bedclothes and pillows. You can check for head lice by combing through your hair with a very fine comb. It may be easier to comb if it is wet. Place a light coloured cloth or piece of paper below, then comb through the length of your hair from the scalp to the tip, working over your whole head. Check the comb and the light coloured paper or cloth after each stroke to see if any lice are there. If you find some insects but are unsure what they are, take them to a health care worker who can check if they are head lice.

T: When you are sure someone has head lice, treatment should start as soon as possible. Combing the lice out, as we have just described, may not always work. You have to have a special, very fine comb, which may be too fine to pull through your hair. Also, if you miss some of the eggs, then the head lice will come back when these eggs hatch. A special shampoo with insecticide may be used to get rid of head lice. Some treatments can irritate your scalp, so be sure to follow the instructions on the bottle. If you are pregnant or nursing, you should avoid these treatments. An insecticide treatment should not be used to stop you from getting head lice, only for those who already have them. After the treatment, it is a good idea to continue to comb your hair with a fine toothed comb for a few days.

P: If anyone in your family does have head lice, check everyone else in your household. If you are able to do a treatment with the special shampoo, treat everyone at the same time, wash all of your bedclothes and put your mattresses out in the sun. Tell other families whose children have been playing with your children so they can check their family too. Any other ideas, Ty?

T: Sure! A simple way to stop you from getting head lice is to put a little bit of vinegar into the water that you use to rinse your hair after washing it. Or you can put some vinegar and water in a spray bottle and spray it onto your hair each day. This makes it harder for the 'nits' to stick to your hair.

*Announcer: This has been "Health Talk," a production of HCJB Global Voice. For more "Good Advice for Good Health" stay tuned to this station, or log on to [hcjbglobal.org](http://hcjbglobal.org).*